

**The Closing Year.**  
 When chimneys no more smoke hold,  
 And the cold weather comes once more;  
 For that the swallows all are gone;  
 When winds be safty, blowing cold  
 From sailing ships and the wet daws;  
 When briars where the rose was bold;  
 On blackened twigs show berries aere,  
 Then oh, my love, and hey, my love,  
 The closing of the year!

When gusts die down and lanes grow still,  
 And the cold weather comes once more;  
 When stiffening stalks begin to thrill,  
 And twisted boughs load at the door;  
 When for some sweet space on the hill,  
 White as long since the thorn-bush blows,  
 Then oh, my love, and hey, my love,  
 The year is at the close.

—[Lottie Woodward Reese.]

**MAT'S HUSBAND.**

BY R. L. KETCHUM.

She doubtless had a woman's reason for marrying him. That kind of reason may not satisfy other people, but it is invariably sufficient for the feminine reasoner.

Sam Toms was what is called "careless" by his Texan neighbors. O. A. Bill Bunn, his father-in-law, himself not a very energetic or useful citizen, used to sit on the steps at the cross-roads store and publicly bewail his sad lot in having Sam for a member of his family.

Nominally, Sam was a cowboy; but most of the time he would tell you he was "jes' layin' off a spell, 't' rest 't'p like."

He had always been just so—distinguished for laziness in an easy-going community—and nobody expected him ever to be otherwise; and it puzzled people immensely when energetic, capable Mattie Bunn accepted him for "reg'lar company," to say nothing of the sensation created by their wedding.

Mat, as has been suggested, probably had some reason for marrying Sam; but it is quite certain that she never told any one what that reason was. Sam was tall, and big, and handsome in his careless, slovenly way; he had always managed, no one knew how, to wear good clothes, too. These facts, and his perennial good-nature and friendly ways, were the only points in his favor. Against him were the points so forcibly taken by his father-in-law, and, also, that he got drunk whenever he could possibly do so, and was, morally, so weak that any one could easily lead him astray.

How Mat and Sam got along, no one but Mat knew. Once in a great while, Sam would do some work and earn a few dollars. If he got home with it without stopping at the saloon, well and good. But oftener than not, he would "drap in jes' 't' take a nip 'r two," and that would settle it. A such times, he would stay and buy drinks for everybody present while his money lasted. Then he would come home in a maudlin, tearful state of intoxication, and invent some tale to account for his condition and the disappearance of his money, winding up with the promise never to let it happen again. And Mat would pretend that she believed him, and would stroke his curly head until he fell asleep. Then she would look at the handsome scamp for a few minutes with love unutterable in her eyes—the fired eyes back of which were a world of unshed tears. But she never complained—not the first word; the firmest mouth and weary look might indicate ever so much, but her lips never expressed it. And Sam gradually grew more and more useless and shiftless, trusting to his wife's ready wit and fertility of resource to carry them both over the bad places.

There were lots of bad places, too. Twice Sam ran into debt several dollars at the saloon, and Mat found some means to pay the debts—only herself knew how. But the second time she informed the saloon man that he must trust Sam no more. And, besides these things, to live—how did they do it? Nobody could guess. Perhaps even Mat herself could not have told; yet live they did—or, rather, existed—and, for the most part, kept out of debt.

Sam sometimes worked, but never for very long. He always found some excuse for leaving a place within a few days. He could almost always find another job easily enough, for he was an excellent "hand" when he chose to be—but he did not hasten about finding a new job when he had given one up; not until they were reduced to the very last straits could Mat get him to hunting work again.

One day, Sam left home for a ranch about thirty-five miles distant, where he heard they wanted help. Two days passed—three—four—five—and no word came from him. Mat was not a little worried, although Sam had often been away for two weeks at a time without sending word to her. But this time it was different; there

was no excuse for his not sending a message, as the stage came by the ranch he had gone to three times a week. If he had found work there, as he expected, he could easily have could easily have notified her. So late in the afternoon of the fifth day, she threw her shawl over her head and went down to her father's to find if they had heard anything of Sam.

The old fellow was standing in the doorway talking to a couple of strangers. "No," he was saying, "they h'aint ben no person 'long yere las' few days, but what 't'longs yere. Mebbe, though, he mout a ben seel over yere 't' Bacon's. Ben that? No? Waaal, my boy's comin' in 'm thar party soon, an' he c'n tell ye. Come in an' feed; Jack'll be yere right soon."

Mat stayed to help her mother with the supper, and during the course of the meal learned that the two strangers were officers trailing a horse-thief, who had stolen a valuable horse at a ranch forty miles east and sold it at Pickett Station, and who was believed to have come this way.

As she listened to the conversation, a sudden nameless fear came upon her, making her feel faint and ill. As soon as supper was over, she took her shawl and hurried home.

Somehow she was not surprised to find the door open. She entered hastily. Sam was in bed, asleep and breathing stertorously. He had evidently been drinking, as his clothes were scattered about the floor, and Mat, looking out the back door, could see his pony standing patiently where Sam had left him, waiting for some one to come and feed him. Mat leaned over the sleeping man and kissed him gently, her eyes full of love. Then she turned to pick up his clothes and put them away. The trousers were heavy, and something jingled in one of the pockets. Instinctively Mat thrust her hand into it, and drew it forth, clasping several gold pieces. As she did so her eyes opened wide, and she stood as if stunned for a time, her heart chilled with the same strange fear that had stricken her awhile ago and impelled her to hurry home.

She rushed to the bed and shook Sam roughly. "Sam! Sam!—wake up!" she almost screamed.

The man turned over and looked at her stupidly. "H'lo, M-Mat! Yete, he ye? Gimme kiss," he said, in a dull tone.

"Not twell ye tells me whar ye done got these yere things!" Mat's voice sounded broken and shrill.

Sam sat up and rubbed his head, looking at her in drunken wonder. "W-w-y, them—them thar, honey?" She shook him fiercely, and said in a lower tone—a tone of earnest force:

"Tell me, Sam Toms, whar ye done got these yere coins! Quick, now!"

Her tone partially sobered the man, whose eyes opened wider as he asked, querulously:

"What ye so all-fired fussy 'bout? I haint done nothin'." And he laughed in a half-drunken, half-nervous way.

"Sam! whar did ye git 'em?" He sat dumbly staring at her.

"Sam!" her voice was full of horror, "did you steal that 't'ar hoss?"

No answer; but Mat saw by his eyes she had guessed the truth. Slowly the coins fell from her hand to the floor; slowly her head bent forward until her face touched the pillow. For minutes she did not move—not until Sam, who had been staring at her wondering, reached out his big hand and laid it caressingly on her head.

Then she sprang to her feet, her hot eyes glaring, and her form trembling with anger and horror. She did not speak, but fixed her gaze on his face for a few seconds. He did not meet her look, and, presently, she turned and ran out of the door.

Sam, almost sober now, called after her, but she did not answer. He got out of bed slowly and started to dress himself. He had almost finished, when Mat, accompanied by her father and the two strangers, returned.

"Thar he is—an' thar's th' money," she said, and passed on out through the back door, without looking at Sam.

There was a jail at the cross roads; it was a primitive affair, but solid and substantial. It was a dugout in the side hill, and had a heavy oak door and great steel hinges and lock. It was plenty strong enough to hold a dozen men, all anxious to escape, and Sam Toms did not try to escape. He only sat still in the low, damp, dark-some room and tried to understand how it had all happened. It must be a drunken dream—but no, he was almost sober, and knew where he was and how and why he was there. But—he could not understand. Had Mat—was it really Mat who had given

him up? There must be some mistake. The big strong man finally began to realize it all. He lay down on the bunk and cried himself to sleep, like a child.

It must have been about one o'clock in the morning when some one silently entered the house of old Bill Bunn, constable. This some one entered by the back door, went stealthily into the room where Bill and his wife slept, rummaged about a few minutes, and then emerged from the house. It was a woman, and she had something in her hand.

Sam Toms was awakened, a little after this, by a rattling, jarring sound. He sprang up, just as the big oaken doors swung back and revealed the figures of a woman and two saddle-horses.

"I come 'r ye, Sam," said the woman, with a sob. "I done bring both ponies an' ou' clo's. Le's go, Sam; we c'n git 't'ar th' rivah beto' mawnin'. Come!"

He clasped her in his arms, and they clung to each other a little while. Then Mat said, more steadily:

"Come, Sam. Le's go ovah 't' Mexico—an' mebbe we c'n try 't' do bet-ovah thar."

And they rode forth in the bright, free moonlight, down toward the Rio Grande—into a new and better life.—[The Argonaut.]

**A Wonderful Machine.**

C. M. Spencer, whose inventions some time ago much simplified the making of screws, has, with A. H. Eddy, President of the Eddy Electric Company, recently invented and completed a machine which is believed to be as far ahead of his other inventions as they were ahead of the old hand machines. The new machine, says the Hartford (Conn.) Courant, is in successful operation, and every test of it has proved highly satisfactory. Human ingenuity, it would seem, can develop screw machinery no further.

The machine will take the wire from a coil, head the screw, cut the threads, cut off the screw from the coil and make the slot. No machine has been invented before that will do all this.

It does without any additional handling of material what before this present invention was always done by two or three machines. Besides, it separates the finished screws from the shavings, depositing them clean and bright in a receptacle placed to receive them. All other machines have to be fed with the straightened wire, the rods being about 10 feet long. The last two or three inches of every rod are wasted. With this machine the only waste is at the end of each coil, two or three inches, and the coil may be 400 or 500 feet long.

The advantage of feeding from a coil is not only in saving of waste, but also in the saving of labor. Put on a coil of wire, start the machine, and it will attend to itself. The operator can attend to other duties if he likes, and when he returns he will find a lot of completed screws, the little machine being still at work and attending strictly to business.

Simplicity is the ruling feature of this machine and the impression produced in watching it work is the wonder that no one ever invented it before. It is safely covered with patents, of course. In other machines the wire is revolved rapidly against the tools and die. In this the wire is held in the same position throughout the process and is carried by an arm against the different instruments, which operate upon it until the completed screw is turned out.

**The Gun Not Needed.**

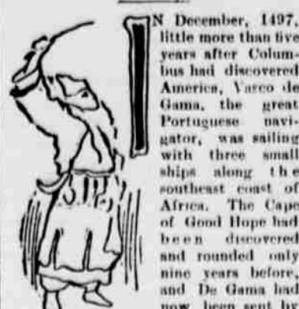
A certain doctor in northern Maine is noted for his love of hunting, and he is reckoned a pretty good shot. During an epidemic not long ago a well-known lumberman (now deceased) had the misfortune to have several of his men quite sick, and one of them being in a dangerous condition, the lumberman started in haste for this doctor. Now our medical friend is sometimes quite slow in getting ready for his trips, and on this occasion, after being called, he was unusually so. Suddenly the thought came to him that he was to go so far into the woods he might see some game, and stepping to the door where the nervous lumberman was impatiently waiting, he inquired, "Say, don't you think I had better take my gun along?" "Gun? no!" was the excited reply, "the man will be dead enough before you can get there."—[Lawistow Journal.]

A young man who lost both his legs a year ago while saving a girl from being run over at a station on a French railway is about to marry the girl, daughter of a wealthy silk manufacturer.

**CHRISTMAS LAND.**

**NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA, WAS DISCOVERED ON DECEMBER 25.**

**Why Its Growth Has Been Retarded—Conflicts Between the Natives, the Dutch and the English—Curious Customs.**



**INDIAN COOLERS IN NATAL.**

On December, 1497, little more than five years after Columbus had discovered America, Vasco de Gama, the great Portuguese navigator, was sailing with three small ships along the southeast coast of Africa. The Cape of Good Hope had been discovered and rounded only nine years before, and De Gama had now been sent by Portugal to discover whether it was possible to reach India by way of it. On Christmas Day he spied a broad and shallow bay in about thirty degrees south latitude, and put into it for water. In honor of the day he named the adjacent land Natal—Christmas.

America and Natal were thus discovered at practically the same time and might have been expected to progress together. But many causes conspired to give America the preference, and it was not until 150 years later that any settlement at all was made in South Africa. This was at Cape Town, and nearly two centuries more elapsed before any permanent settlement was affected at the Bay of Natal. This was in 1824. When it was nine years old a townsite was laid off and named Durban, in honor of Sir Benjamin D'Urban, Governor of Cape Colony.

At this time the white population of Natal was very small and consisted almost entirely of Englishmen. Ten years later they were to witness the arrival of an overwhelming Dutch population.

The Dutch had settled the cape and had never become reconciled to the English taking possession of it in 1805. Many had at once retreated to the interior, far beyond the reach of the English officials. But as England extended the borders of Cape Colony most of them were once more brought back under the



**A STREET IN NATAL.**

laced British flag. Many causes conspired to increase their dislike of British rule, and during the years 1836 and 1837 over 10,000 of them gathered together their flocks and herds and "trekked" to the north.

Some went to what are now the Orange Free State and the South African Republic of Transvaal. Others went to Natal, at that time unclaimed by any European Power. In 1838, taking advantage of certain troubles with the natives, England seized Natal, but Parliament refused to appropriate money for its government, and it was evacuated a year later.

A few months afterward the Zulus, under their chief, Dingaan, murdered treacherously a large party of Boers and laid Natal waste. Hundreds of the Dutch were killed, and many others only escaped by putting out to sea. Durban was destroyed. But the Boers finally rallied, defeated Dingaan in a great battle and drove him from Natal. They then began to make reprisals for the treacherous murder of their kindred.



**NATIVE WOMAN.**

But here England stepped in. She had not been much troubled by the Zulu atrocities; she was now horrified by the Dutch reprisals. She ordered them to be stopped. The Boers paid no attention to her demands, and in 1843 she re-occupied Natal and has held it ever since. The Boers resisted vigorously, but were forced to yield at last. Fate, however, worked out its revenge pretty well.

Nearly forty years after, at Isandhwas, these very Zulus whom England had protected from the vengeance of the Boers almost annihilated an entire British army, killing all but a score out of 1300 men.

In 1886 gold was discovered in the Transvaal, and since then South Africa has everywhere progressed with great rapidity. Natal has now a population



**INDIAN COOLERS IN NATAL.**

of 460,000 natives, 45,000 whites and 34,000 Asiatics. Durban has 24,000 inhabitants, half white, the other half pretty equally divided between natives and Hindus. These Hindus are to a stranger a wholly unexpected sight. Natives he expects to see of all kinds, but not Hindus. The majority of these are coolies, brought from India originally as indentured servants, bound for a term of five years at moderate wages. If they stay another five years they can claim a free passage home at any time within the next three years. But few take advantage of this. The majority become thoroughly acclimated and settle down with their families as permanent residents.

A small percentage of the Asiatic element consist of Parsees, Sikhs and other high-caste Indian tribes. There are also many Malays and natives of Java and Sumatra. These are popularly known as Arabs, although they are nothing of the sort. They are usually merchants, peddlers—at, grossy-looking fellows in dirty white gowns and turbans, many of them. All the Hindus wear their national dress. Every fashion extant in India can also be found in Durban.

There are few negro women in Durban, nearly all domestic work being done by

ever, have no power to arrest whites under any circumstances whatever.

The natives are wonderfully honest. Not one per cent. of the houses in Durban are locked at night, nearly everyone leaving the back door open to admit the servants in the morning, yet theft is almost unknown. There is no poverty in Natal—at least one never sees a beggar or hears of one.

Contrary to the general impression in the United States, this country, and in fact all of Africa south of Delagoa Bay is very healthy. The death rate in Durban is only ten in a thousand, and that of all Natal is even less. One reason of this is that there are comparatively few children here and the list is not swelled by the infant mortality that cuts such a figure in other parts of the world.

Durban is the principal city of Natal. It is laid off on the longitudinal plan, nearly everything of importance being situated on one of two long streets, which run west from the landing place and lose themselves in the wooded heights of the Berea, some five miles distant. The Berea is a long ridge running north and south, and thickly dotted with the villas of the richer people. During the summer or rainy season it is a very beautiful place. In winter, however, it is rather dusty.

Of course, being in the Southern hemisphere the seasons here are different from those of America. Christmas is midsummer day and June is the dead of winter. The climate varies with the distance from the sea level and consequent elevation. Durban's winter climate is much like that of Southern California, while in summer the heat is very great, the thermometer always standing above 100 degrees in the middle of the day.

Pieter Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, is only seventy-three miles from Durban by train and less than fifty in a direct line, but its elevation is 2218 feet and its climate consequently much colder.

At Charlestown, 180 miles in a direct line from Durban, the elevation is nearly 5400 feet and the winter is very cold.

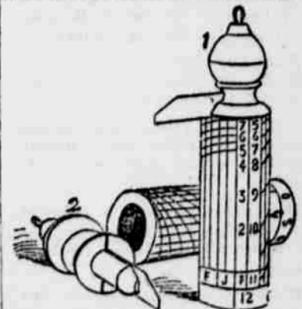
There is some wonderful engineering on the line of the Government railways in Natal. The country, besides being a sharply ascending one, is cut by a broad transverse valley, necessitating many descents in grade. The result is that in running from the coast to Charlestown, at the edge of the Transvaal, 304 miles by train, every pound of freight is lifted vertically two miles and a half. The railways and telegraph lines all belong to the Government.

Natal is governed by a legislative council of thirty-one members, twenty-four elective, five sitting by virtue of their official positions and two appointed by the Governor. All high officials are appointed by the Queen. Really the council has very little power. The administration is not responsible in any way to the people, and can do pretty much what it likes. Still, the council has a very handsome Parliament building at Pieter Maritzburg and goes through the motions of governing with great impressiveness.—San Francisco Chronicle.

**A Watch Without Works.**

A peculiar form of pocket dial is here illustrated, which is used by the peasants of the French Pyrenees.

This instrument has a movable head holding a piece of metal, which moves on a joint like the blade of a knife. For convenience in carrying it is turned down, as in Fig. 2, and placed in the cylinder. When in use the metal is turned outward, as in Fig. 1, and the instrument suspended by the ring at the top, so that the shadow of the style is thrown vertically upon the cylinder. The extremity of the shadow falls upon the



**DIAL USED BY FRENCH MOUNTAINEERS.**

curved line denoting the hour. The instrument must be adjusted for every month in the year, which is accomplished by turning the movable head till the style corresponds with the vertical line denoting the month.

Such a dial is not very accurate at the best, but it doubtless serves the purpose of the French mountaineers, to whom the loss or gain of a few minutes is of no importance.

**What He Got For Christmas.**



"Did you get anything for Christmas, Billy?"

"Yes, Dad giv' me two licks, an' I didn't hang up no stockin' for them neither!"—Life.

The Czar of Russia is the largest individual land owner in the world. The area of his possessions is far greater than that of the entire republic of France.